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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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A-193 NO.

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GROUP 1 HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 BUREAU OF
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
 OCT 21 1964

DATE: October 21, 1964

FROM : AMERICAN EMBASSY, GUATEMALA

SUBJECT : Internal Defense Plan Progress Report (Incorporating Monthly Guerrilla Report)

REF : Department's Telegram 101

REVIEWED BY *Egy* DATE *2/2*
 PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

In our last EDP Progress Report (A-440 of March 6, 1964) the Embassy stated that progress on our basic domestic political goals had been mixed but generally encouraging, and raised several potential storm warnings concerning what appeared to be the initiation of a concerted Communist-backed urban terrorist campaign and the possible repercussions of the restricted Constituent Assembly election process. Fortunately, these dangers did not materialize, and currently, encouraging progress is being made in efforts to return the nation to "constitutionality" and to combat potential threats to internal security and stability.

1. INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE GUERRILLA THREAT

Communist-backed subversive activity has continued to consist of sporadic small-scale guerrilla action in rural areas (primarily the Izabal and Escuintla Departments) and occasional terrorist bombings in the capital. There has been no significant increase in such activity, no evidence of a change in guerrilla and terrorist tactics, and no indications that the subversive group are gaining in strength. Rural guerrilla action continues to consist of attacks on isolated fincas, and the occasional assassination of a finca owner or comisionado militar (civilian agent of the army) and occasional attacks against small isolated police or military outposts; while urban "terrorist" activity involves primarily the explosion of home-made bombs that do little property damage and have thus far resulted in no serious casualties, and occasional robberies of small business establishments. All evidence continues to indicate that the subversives are operating in small, elusive bands and have not organized themselves into any cohesive group that could carry out well-coordinated activities or withstand confrontation with any well-equipped substantial Guatemalan military unit. During the month of October few reports of guerrilla or terrorist activity have come to the Embassy's attention.

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Contents Classification Approved by:
 DSI: VJ/aky

Clearances:

DDI: Drowfuss: lch

Coordinated with Country Team Internal Security Committee

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but on October 17, in one of the more daring raids they have staged, a guerrilla group surprised a nine-man Army outpost at Panzos (Isabal Department), killing three soldiers and wounding two. Additionally, earlier in the month two bombs were exploded in Puerto Barrios, damaging an unoccupied railroad car.

_____ have received reports that over the past several months the Government has quietly but with apparently increasing efficiency kept pressure on guerrilla bands and on terrorist leaders. According to such reports Guatemalan military units have, without fanfare, "eliminated" some 30 guerrillas, and police in the capital have arrested several terrorist leaders, serving to disrupt guerrilla and terrorist plans. b1
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Among recent measures taken by the COG to increase its effectiveness against subversion are: 1) the initiation of a counter-insurgency school at which integral platoons of troops are given six weeks courses in anti-guerrilla techniques and returned to their units; 2) the establishment at long last of the national level intelligence organization; and 3) the acquisition (under MIA) of a 63-foot radar-equipped patrol boat which should increase coastal patrol capabilities. The subversive groups' difficulties are also reportedly being compounded by serious dissension between some guerrilla leaders and their Communist Party (PCP) backers. However, the guerrillas and terrorists are still reportedly receiving training from "foreign agents" and _____ may be receiving occasional reinforcements, primarily from across the Honduran border. b1
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Thus, the Government seems to be making some headway against the subversive bands. While it will be extremely difficult to eliminate the guerrillas and terrorists entirely under current circumstances they, while remaining a nuisance and the nucleus of a subversive threat should the situation deteriorate and public discontent become a factor, do not now represent a threat to the stability of the Government. However, perhaps the biggest present threat is the possibility of the assassination of Chief of Government Aralza by Communist-backed guerrillas. The existence of a plot to accomplish his assassination was uncovered during September, and he undoubtedly remains the prime target of the nation's subversive groups. b1
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sides, it has been difficult to coordinate military efforts in the rugged terrain of the border area. The Embassy knows of no successful significant joint strike against a guerrilla group. B1
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Cooperative efforts have reportedly denied habitual border crossing points to guerrilla bands, but they reportedly are seeking and using alternate routes along the difficult-to-police frontier. Perhaps the most effective means for increasing coordination against guerrillas would be emphasis on a rapid exchange of intelligence information between Guatemala and Honduras on the movements of suspected subversive groups, the provision of effective direct means of communications between Honduran and Guatemalan units operating in the border area, and if it has not already been arranged, the right of "hot pursuit" across the border in both directions. B1
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The Status of the Central American Defense Council

Although the Central American Defense Council, with the participation of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras is theoretically "functioning", has a budget, and a Permanent Secretariat in Guatemala City headed by Guatemalan Colonel Jorge Hernandez, the Embassy knows of no significant concrete actions it has taken. B1
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The prospective deposit of Costa Rica's ratification of the ODECA Charter should serve to move the Council into the ODECA structure and bring Costa Rica and El Salvador into the fold. The Guatemalan, Honduran and Nicaraguan representatives on the Council are currently in Washington to "coordinate the Council's activities with the Inter-American Defense Board." Hopefully the Council can in the future serve as an instrument to increase cooperation among the CA nations in combatting subversive activity in the isthmus.

2. THE RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY

There have been several recent significant developments bearing on returning the country to "constitutional rule". The controversial Constituent Assembly elections of last May, which because of the restrictive process used to select the Assemblymen could have led to a storm of serious opposition criticism, passed quietly and the Assembly has been in session since July 6. The Commission charged with preparing a new draft constitution has been moving along its work, and indications are that the Constitution will contain no startling innovations or particularly controversial provisions. The Assembly announced that the new Constitution is to be promulgated on March 15, 1965 and stipulated that presidential and congressional elections will be held within six months thereafter. Various political groups (including most sectors "excluded" from participation in the Constituent Assembly elections) are seeking to gather enough adherents (50,000) to establish themselves as legal parties and to not at this point seem to be encountering serious hindrance from the CGC.

However, perhaps the most significant development for the political future of the country, is the apparent decision of the Peralta Government to take a hand in the future elections, through backing an "official" party (the newly forming Partido Institucional Democrático - PID) and attempting to forge a coalition with the

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Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN) and the Partido Revolucionario (PR) to back a single presidential candidate -- probably a military officer

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3. PROGRESS ON OTHER GOALS

We have had no difficulty with our primary international relations goal -- that of having the CCG support the positions of the Western World in international organizations. We have expended a good deal of effort on the knotty Belize problem, having through the good offices of the United States, arranged for talks between a representative of the British and the Guatemalans in Guatemala City. Although no significant progress towards the solution of the impasse was made, the effort did at least initiate a dialogue between the disputants and hopefully laid the foundation for future talks and negotiations. The Guatemalans are anxious for such talks to continue and we should urge the British to be forthcoming in responding to the Guatemalan desire to keep searching for a way to resolve the problem.

In the field of labor we are continuing a modest program, including the sponsorship of seminars and the use of training grants to identify and support promising labor leaders in an effort to help strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the democratic labor movement. Similarly, our youth program is proceeding at full steam with a series of exchange programs, leader grants, utilization of the bi-National Center, and intensive contact between young Embassy officers (and American students) with promising Guatemalan youth leaders in various fields.

Although the CCG has made no giant strides in the field of basic long range social and economic reforms, "Operation Honesty" continues to bear fruit in fiscal probity,

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Improved economic position of the Government (a budgetary surplus for the first time in several years), hopes for better planning procedures through a "program budget" and modest advances in basic programs like school and road construction, rural health, etc.

Civic Action programs continue to receive the strong support of the CGC and with our assistance have had some effect on rural areas with the construction of roads, provision of potable water, and health activities, and school hot lunch programs.

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